UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/50/519
13 November 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fiftieth session
Agenda item 95 (c)

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION:
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (HABITAT II)

Preparations for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. By its resolution 47/180 of 22 December 1992, the General Assembly decided to convene a second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), to be held at Istanbul from 3 to 14 June 1996, and established a preparatory committee, open to participation by all Member States, to oversee preparations for the Conference. In resolution 49/109 of 19 December 1994, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in consultation with the Secretary-General of the Conference, to report to the Assembly at its fiftieth session on the progress made in the preparations for the Conference, including the implementation of resolution 49/109. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

2. In addition to a report on the progress of work of the Preparatory Committee, as requested in General Assembly resolution 49/109, Member States may also wish to have a summary account of activities by the Secretariat, so as to obtain a comprehensive overview of progress in preparing for the Conference. Accordingly, annexed to the present report is a summary status report of the activities of the Secretariat related to the preparations for the Conference. The present report should also be reviewed in conjunction with the report of the Preparatory Committee to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, 1/ which contains a detailed record of work and the decisions taken by the Preparatory Committee at its second substantive session, held at the United Nations Office at Nairobi from 24 April to 5 May 1995.

3. The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) aims to address pressing human settlements issues and problems within the overall context of sustainable development and has the following main objectives:

(a) In the long term, to arrest the deterioration of global human settlements conditions and ultimately create the conditions for achieving improvements in the living environment of all people on a sustainable basis, with special attention to the needs and contributions of women and vulnerable social groups, whose quality of life and participation in development have been hampered by exclusion and inequality, affecting the poor in general;

(b) To adopt a general statement of principles and commitments and formulate a related global plan of action capable of guiding national and international efforts through the first two decades of the next century.

4. In addition, the General Assembly affirmed that the Conference should:

(a) Review trends in human settlements policies and programmes undertaken to implement the recommendations adopted at the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, held at Vancouver, Canada, in 1976; 2/

(b) Conduct a mid-term review of the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000; 3/

(c) Review the implementation of Agenda 21 with respect to human settlements;

(d) Review current global trends in economic and social development as they relate to human settlements, and include recommendations for future actions at the national and international levels.

II. SUMMARY OF PROGRESS OF PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

A. Progress made during the inter-sessional period

5. In conformity with the decisions and recommendation adopted by the Preparatory Committee at its first substantive session, held at Geneva from 11 to 22 April 1994, the Secretariat accelerated and broadened the scope of its work in three main areas: (a) the preparation of reviews and substantive documents for the second substantive session of the Preparatory Committee; (b) the provision of guidelines and assistance to national committees in the preparation of their national reports and plans of action; and (c) the creation of public awareness of the issues to be addressed by the Conference through a wide array of regional and international activities.

B. Second session of the Preparatory Committee

6. The Preparatory Committee held its second substantive session at the United Nations Office at Nairobi from 24 April to 5 May 1995. The session was attended by the representatives of 122 States, a delegation from Palestine, 13 United

Nations programmes and organizations, seven specialized agencies, six intergovernmental organizations, 68 non-governmental organizations and representatives from local authorities. At its 1st plenary meeting, the Committee elected Mr. E. Kouliev (Azerbaijan) as Vice-Chairman to replace Mr. Hassan Aziz Ogly Hassanov (Azerbaijan), who had been assigned by his Government to other duties, and Mr. H. L. De Silva (Sri Lanka) as Vice-Chairman to replace Mr. Stanley Kalpagé (Sri Lanka), who had been similarly assigned by his Government to other duties.

7. The Preparatory Committee took note of the significant progress made since its first session and focused its attention on, inter alia, the substantive and political aspects of the preparatory process, most notably: (a) the plan of action of the Conference - the document entitled "Statement of principles and commitments and global plan of action" - designed to guide national and international efforts in the field of shelter and sustainable human settlements development through the first two decades of the next century (decision II/8); (b) organizational aspects of the Conference and its rules of procedure (decisions II/3 and II/4); (c) preparations at the national, regional and international levels (decision II/5); and (d) criteria for nominating and selecting best practices for improving living environments (decision II/7).

8. Regarding the statement of principles and commitments and the global plan of action, the Preparatory Committee established an informal working group to tackle the substantive issues contained in the draft document. This group, in turn, established an informal drafting group to reach a preliminary consensus on the structure and substantive content of the document.

9. The discussions and debate in the informal drafting group were intensive and were marked by wide and active participation on the part of delegations, reflecting the importance of the issues addressed by the preparatory process. During the negotiations, significant progress was achieved, and a consensus reached, on the main headings of the document to contain the statement of principles and commitments and the global plan of action, as well as on the substantive content of its four chapters: (a) Preamble; (b) Goals and principles; (c) Commitments; and (d) Strategies for implementation.

10. Furthermore, desirous to review a draft document as complete as possible at its third substantive session, the Preparatory Committee decided that the informal drafting group might convene for a maximum of two meetings during the inter-sessional period to continue work on the draft document. The Preparatory Committee also provided further guidance to the Secretariat on harmonizing various portions of the document already agreed to.

11. Regarding the organizational aspects of the Conference and its rules of procedure, the Committee reached a consensus on provisions in the rules of procedure which would enable representatives of local authorities to be invited to the Conference and to participate, without the right of vote, in its deliberations on questions within the scope of their activities. At the same time, the Committee adopted organizational arrangements that will allow partners such as local authorities, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations and the private and professional sectors to contribute to the work of the Conference through committee hearings, following the model established

for the "World Hearings on Development" convened by the President of the General Assembly in June 1994.

12. Regarding preparations at the national level, the Committee took note of the substantial progress achieved since the first substantive session, and further strengthened the best practices initiative on improving the living environment by further refining the criteria for nomination and the format for reporting on best practices. It also provided further guidance to the Secretariat regarding the constitution of an independent panel to select the most deserving initiatives to be given special recognition at the Conference.

13. Furthermore, the Preparatory Committee, in the light of the importance of the Conference for improving global human settlements conditions and for reaching major sustainable development objectives of the recently held conferences on children, the environment, human rights, small island developing States, population and social development, as well as those of the Fourth World Conference on Women, addressed the issue of financing for the Conference and its preparatory process.

C. Progress made since the second substantive session of the Preparatory Committee

14. The first inter-sessional meeting of the informal drafting group for the draft statement of principles and commitments and the global plan of action was convened at the United Nations Office at Nairobi from 17 to 21 July 1995. In addition to the chair and the core group representing their respective regions, an additional 33 countries, five United Nations system entities and intergovernmental organizations, two associations of local authorities and five non-governmental organizations attended the meeting. The informal drafting group completed three parts of chapter IV, concerned with the global plan of action, of the document and decided to convene a second meeting of the group from 9 to 13 October 1995, to be held in Paris, upon the invitation of the Government of France.

15. The resulting draft document of the first inter-sessional meeting of the informal drafting group was circulated to all Governments, United Nations programmes and organizations, specialized agencies and a wide range of organizations representing key actors of civil society and partners in the Conference's preparatory process. The draft document was also made available to the general public through the Internet. Comments were received from all of the above-mentioned organizations and institutions and were distributed to the informal drafting group prior to its second inter-sessional meeting in Paris. The draft document to emerge from this second inter-sessional meeting will be submitted for review and negotiation to the Preparatory Committee at its third substantive session, to be held in New York in February 1996.

16. Efforts were also intensified to mobilize financial resources in support of the preparatory process. These efforts resulted in, inter alia, substantial in-cash and in-kind contributions and pledges by public and private sector foundations. The Secretariat is further spearheading efforts to develop sustainable financing strategies, through partnerships with the private sector,

for the implementation of the plan of action to be approved at the "City Summit" in Istanbul. To support the above effort, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) has taken part in the organization of a series of regional and global consultations on financing strategies for housing and sustainable urban development.

III. DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

17. At its 7th plenary meeting, on 5 May, the Preparatory Committee adopted a number of decisions, the importance and implications of which, for the Conference and its preparatory process, are analysed below. These decisions appear in the report of the Committee on its second substantive session. 1/

A. Decisions requiring action by the General Assembly

Decision II/1. Financing of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and its preparatory activities

18. The Preparatory Committee noted with appreciation the in-cash and in-kind support provided for the preparations for the Conference and, in particular, the contributions made so far to the two Trust Funds set up pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/180. However, it expressed its concern that the level of contributions to the Trust Funds had been insufficient to support the remaining preparatory activities. The Preparatory Committee therefore called upon all Governments, especially those of the developed countries and others in a position to do so, and international and regional financial institutions, to increase their in-cash and in-kind contributions to the two Trust Funds. It also called upon the Secretary-General of the Conference to explore all feasible avenues for funding, including the private sector and public foundations, and requested the General Assembly to allocate within existing United Nations budgetary resources sufficient funds to cover the costs of general temporary assistance, advisory services, secretariat operations, communications, consultants, information dissemination, and miscellaneous expenses for the period October 1995 to July 1996.

Implications

19. As of September 1995, two thirds of the cash resources required for the preparatory process of Habitat II has been mobilized. Pursuant to Preparatory Committee decision II/1, the Secretary-General of the Conference is mobilizing increasing levels of in-cash and in-kind contributions from the private sector and public foundations. In addition, over and above the cash contributions raised, a substantial amount of in-kind contributions from Governments, agencies and foundations have considerably strengthened the preparatory process, demonstrating the commitment of the international community to the preparatory process. However, the remaining one-third in-cash contribution is still required to enable the Secretariat to undertake all the planned activities, at least at a minimal level, including support to developing and least developed countries, as well as countries with economies in transition, in order to enable them to continue with their broad-based participatory processes to complete

their national reports and action plans and participate effectively in the preparatory process and the Conference itself.

Decision II/2. Third session of the Preparatory Committee

20. The Preparatory Committee, bearing in mind General Assembly resolution 49/109, in which, inter alia, the Assembly approved a third preparatory session, of relatively short duration, in early 1996, decided to recommend that such third session be held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, for a period of two weeks, in early February 1996.

Implications

21. A third session of this duration will allow sufficient time to enable the Preparatory Committee to finalize negotiations, reach an agreement on the draft statement of principles and commitments and the global plan of action of the Conference based on the work of the informal drafting group during the inter-sessional period and, further, inter alia, on priorities identified by Member States in the course of their respective preparatory processes, while taking fully into account the decisions of the major United Nations conferences held during 1995: the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women. The Preparatory Committee will also be expected to reach an agreement, inter alia, on the provisional agenda of the Conference. The Secretariat is making preparations for the effective utilization of the opportunity created by the third session of the Preparatory Committee.

Decision II/3. Recommendations of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) on the organization of work, including the establishment of committees and procedural matters

22. The Preparatory Committee recommends to the General Assembly, at its current session, the adoption of the organization of work, including the establishment of committees and procedural matters, for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) as set forth in the annex to decision II/3. In recognition of the fact that no single group of actors can effectively solve the world's shelter and human settlements problems alone, the Preparatory Committee further stressed the need for Habitat II to become a conference of partnerships, as has been the case for the preparatory process at the national, regional and international levels. These partnerships should include a wide exchange of information and experiences between Member States and representatives designated by international associations consisting of: local authorities; relevant professionals; researchers and academics; non-governmental and community-based organizations; youth organizations; industry, commerce, finance and services; trade unions; parliamentarians; and media invited to the Conference. Also included are all agencies, programmes and organizations of the United Nations system, which have been called upon to be actively associated in the preparatory process of the Conference.

23. In recognition of the role and contribution of local authorities in improving human settlements conditions and to sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world, the Preparatory Committee further recommends

to the General Assembly that it authorize a special modality for local authority participation, comparable to that provided to the representatives of national human rights institutions at the World Conference on Human Rights, held at Vienna from 14 to 25 June 1993, and to the representatives of selected scientific associations at the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction held at Yokohama, Japan, from 23 to 27 May 1994. Consequently, an additional rule, rule 61, is added to the provisional rules of procedure to provide the following:

> "Representatives of local authorities, designated by accredited international associations of local authorities in consultation with national associations of local authorities, invited to the Conference may participate, without the right to vote, in the deliberations of the Conference, its Main Committees and, as appropriate, any other committee or working group, on questions within the scope of their activities. Every effort shall be made to make the representation of local authorities balanced in terms of region, size and type of local authorities."

24. The Preparatory Committee also recommends to the General Assembly that the plenary session consist of two segments. The first segment, to take place from 3 to 11 June 1996, will allow for a general exchange of views on the main themes of the Conference, as will be outlined in the annotated agenda. The second segment, from 12 to 14 June 1996, will be identified as the "High-level Segment" and will provide the opportunity for "world leaders to commit themselves to making cities, towns and villages in their countries healthy, safe, just and sustainable", as encouraged by the General Assembly in paragraph 14 of resolution 49/109. Therefore, this segment should be held "at the highest possible level of participation", as recommended by the General Assembly in paragraph 1 of its resolution 47/180, and as reaffirmed in paragraph 5 of resolution 49/109. Consequently, Member States are encouraged to be represented at this segment by their heads of State or heads of Government, or their high-level appointees, who could present specific commitments on behalf of their respective Governments.

25. The Preparatory Committee further recommends that Committee 2 of the Conference, composed of the representatives of Member States, will ensure broad-based participation by conducting hearings, similar to the "World Hearings on Development" convened by the President of the General Assembly in June 1994. For these hearings, statements and commitments will be brought to Committee 2 by the representatives of all the partners mentioned in paragraph 22 above, including the organizations, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system.

Implications

26. The above recommendations give expression to, and further reinforce, the broad-based participation called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/180, and reaffirmed by its resolution 49/109. They also pave the way for a conference of partnerships and for broad commitment to follow-up action and for the implementation of the resulting global plan of action. These recommendations will effectively allow for commitments to be made by Governments and local authorities and all relevant actors, thus mobilizing and channelling,

in an unprecedented manner, the human, technical and financial resources and energies of civil society. The Secretariat, in its activities during the remainder of the preparatory activities, will work with the various partners to ensure that the "City Summit" becomes such a conference of partnerships.

Decision II/4. Adoption of the rules of procedure for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)

27. The Preparatory Committee, noting that the Conference would have before it the provisional rules of procedure, to be endorsed by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, on the recommendation of the Preparatory Committee, and that those rules would be in accordance with the established practice of the United Nations, including the most recent United Nations conferences, and would take into account paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution 49/109, adopted the provisional rules of procedure as contained in the annex to that decision, and decided to forward them to the General Assembly for endorsement.

28. These rules of procedure are in accordance with those adopted by other United Nations conferences, with the exception of the additional rule 61 referred to in paragraph 23 above, under decision II/3.

Implications

29. The recommendations contained in decision II/4 are entirely consistent with those contained in decision II/3 and together will pave the way for more effective and efficient implementation of the Global Plan of Action to emerge from the Conference. It also builds upon the trend in recent United Nations conferences, and the work of their various committees, to involve key groups of actors in a common effort to find solutions to some of the most pressing social, economic and environmental challenges of a rapidly changing world.

B. Other decisions

Decision II/5. Preparatory activities

Activities at the national level

30. The Preparatory Committee noted with satisfaction that more than 100 national committees have been established, and also took note that many national committees were preparing their national plans of action, including first-phase five-year plans identifying their highest priorities. It recommended that all countries that had not yet done so establish national committees for the Conference and undertake in-country preparatory processes as a matter of priority, and that national committees that had not already done so, enter into a consultative process (including the assessment of shelter and settlements conditions, the application of shelter and urban indicators and the identification of and learning from best practices), involving all key groups of actors, in order to reach a consensus on priority issues and problems and to formulate a first-phase five-year plan of action, or give an overview of existing plans of action, which is to be completed no later than 1 December 1995. It further requested that all national committees submit, in a

timely manner, a substantial progress report to the Secretary-General of the Conference, no later than 1 September 1995. It called upon all Member States to take advantage of the assessments carried out in the preparation of national reports on Habitat II by establishing a permanent capacity at the national and local levels for the regular monitoring of human settlements conditions and trends, and also called upon all countries that are able to do so to increase their voluntary contributions for in-country preparations, through the secretariat of the Conference.

Regional objectives and activities

31. The Preparatory Committee, noting with satisfaction the cooperation so far provided by the regional commissions of the United Nations and other regional organizations in holding and participating in preparatory meetings which provide opportunities for countries to share experiences in in-country preparations and to identify issues of common concern in shelter and settlements development, recommended, inter alia, that regional and international resources, including those of the regional commissions of the United Nations, other relevant regional intergovernmental organizations, development banks and others, be made available as far as possible to representatives of national committees for the Conference and the Secretary-General of the Conference to participate in regional activities that will enrich national preparatory processes. 4/

International objectives and activities

32. The Preparatory Committee took note with satisfaction that the Secretary-General of the Conference had successfully encouraged Governments and other groups of key actors to participate actively in the preparatory process as witnessed by the numerous activities inscribed in the "learning year". It noted with appreciation the resources that had been contributed to the application of shelter and urban indicators and to the identification, nomination and dissemination of best practices, and further noted with satisfaction that the Secretary-General had integrated gender analysis and gender-sensitive issues in the process of identification of best practices. The Preparatory Committee requested the Secretary-General to prepare feasibility studies for the financing and establishment of international support programmes proposed and initiated during the preparatory process to implement the objectives of the Global Plan of Action, with particular emphasis on monitoring and applying shelter and urban indicators, promoting the sharing and learning of best practices and establishing a leadership-training facility.

Implications

33. This recommendation translates the desire and commitment of the international community to an action-oriented Global Plan of Action to result from the Conference. The Secretariat, in consultation with all major groups, will undertake and present a feasibility study on key tools and instruments that could be effectively used for furthering the objectives of the Conference and the implementation of its Global Plan of Action. As demonstrated by the preparatory process, the implementation of innovative approaches for strengthening institutions and capacity-building do not necessarily require new institutional arrangements, but rather a reorientation of largely existing

human, technical and financial resources within a coherent and internally consistent framework.

Decision II/6. The State of Human Settlements Report, major reviews and other substantive documentation

34. The Preparatory Committee having noted, in its decision II/8, that it envisaged a Global Plan of Action that would take into account, among other sources, recent research and studies, including the four major reviews and the 1996 edition of the Global Report on Human Settlements (the latter being the same as the State of Human Settlements Report called for by the Preparatory Committee at its first substantive session) decided that such documentation should be synthesized and presented as a single document to the Preparatory Committee at its third session and, prior to the Conference at Istanbul, converted into a publication for popular consumption and into a broadcast-quality video(s).

Implications

35. This recommendation provides the Secretariat with clear guidance on the manner and form in which the Global Report and the major reviews should be presented to the Preparatory Committee, as well as to the general public, in order to contribute effectively to creating greater public awareness of the issues before the Conference.

Decision II/7. Criteria for nominating and selecting best practices

36. The Preparatory Committee, having reviewed the criteria, format and proposed methods for identifying and learning from best practices for improving the living environment, decided to further strengthen the contribution of the best practices initiative to the preparatory process by:

(a) Encouraging national committees to organize national competitions and exhibitions on best practices to further promote the sharing of successful experiences and the incorporation of lessons to be learned in their respective national plans of action;

(b) Amending the scope and depth of the search for best practices to include such issues as consumption and production patterns and the reduction and/or replacement of the use of non-renewable resources;

(c) Calling on the Secretary-General of the Conference to make appropriate arrangements for convening a regionally representative, independent and prestigious jury to review the best practice submissions and to provide special recognition to the most deserving initiatives promoting sustainable human settlements development in the form of awards to those organizations directly involved in the best practice.

Implications

37. The above actions further reinforce the decision of the Preparatory Committee a its first substantive session, in which it called for the

Secretariat to identify and disseminate best practices for improving the living environment. This initiative will contribute directly to the objectives of the Conference. It will also provide the international community with a wide and diverse database on solutions to some of the world's most pressing social, economic and environmental problems and contribute directly to the implementation of the national and global plans of action by providing new ways and means of sharing and transferring know-how, expertise and experience.

Decision II/8. Inter-sessional arrangements for drafting the statement of principles and commitments and the global plan of action

38. The Preparatory Committee, having received the report of Working Group II on the consideration of agenda item 3, Statement of principles and commitments, and global plan of action, which had been discussed in informal and formal sessions, acknowledged the work that had been done through that arrangement under the chairmanship of Mr. Glynn A. C. Khonje (Zambia), and decided to continue with the drafting and review of documents during the inter-sessional period in an open-ended informal group, with the identical representation of the core group, and requested the Secretary-General of the Conference to provide appropriate assistance during that process. It further decided that the inter-sessional arrangement should proceed as follows:

(a) After the close of the second session of the Preparatory Committee, the drafts of the preamble of the global plan of action, the statement of principles and goals, and the commitments would be forwarded to the secretariat of the Conference, which would then prepare a draft document, consistent with paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 49/109, which would facilitate the work of the informal drafting group referred to above;

(b) The drafting group would then meet at a first inter-sessional meeting, not later than the end of August 1995, to review the draft prepared by the secretariat, taking into account, inter alia, the views expressed by Member States and other participants, and produce a second draft, which would be forwarded to all States for comments;

(c) If deemed necessary, the drafting group would then hold a second meeting, not later than the end of October 1995, to review the second draft. The final draft would form part of the documentation for the third session of the Preparatory Committee and would be circulated to Governments at least six weeks before that session, in all official languages;

The product of the process being considered non-negotiated.

Implications

39. This recommendation is being implemented by the Secretariat, beginning with the organization and holding of the first inter-sessional meeting of the informal drafting group in Nairobi from 17 to 21 July 1995. A second meeting is scheduled to take place from 9 to 13 October 1995 in Paris, upon the invitation of the Government of France. The document to result from this process will be circulated to Governments at least six weeks prior to being presented to the Preparatory Committee, at its third substantive session, for negotiation.

Decision II/9. Accreditation of non-governmental organizations

40. The Preparatory Committee, having received the report of the Bureau on its review of the applications for accreditation submitted by non-governmental organizations, decided to grant accreditation to the following categories of non-governmental organizations: (a) 24 organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; (b) 17 organizations accredited to the Commission on Sustainable Development and placed on the Roster; (c) 52 organizations having applied for accreditation and having satisfied the required criteria. An additional 118 non-governmental organizations are in the process of being granted accreditation.

41. The Preparatory Committee noted that, under the rules of procedure for the participation of non-governmental organizations adopted at its first meeting, those non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council that express their wish to attend the Conference and the meetings of its Preparatory Committee shall be accredited for participation. The Committee also took note of the decision of the Economic and Social Council, dated 25 July 1994, which states that non-governmental organizations accredited to the Commission on Sustainable Development should be placed on the Roster. The non-governmental organizations now being granted accreditation are in addition to those non-governmental organizations that were granted accreditation in decision I/3 of the Preparatory Committee.

Implications

42. The implication, for the Secretariat, of the above decision is likely to be an increasing number of requests for substantive and other forms of support from the Secretariat to facilitate the active participation and involvement of non-governmental organizations in in-country preparatory processes and for their effective participation in the third session of the Preparatory Committee and in the Conference itself. The Secretariat has been taking appropriate steps, with considerable success, to enhance its links with the non-governmental organization community, in the context, particularly, of preparations for the Conference so as to fulfil the aims to that effect of General Assembly resolution 49/109.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 37 (A/50/37).

2/ See Report of Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Vancouver, 31 May-11 June 1976 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.76.IV.7 and corrigendum).

3/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 8, addendum (A/43/8/Add.1).

4/ Attention is also drawn, in this connection, to the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the regional commissions on the preparations for the Conference at the regional level (A/50/411), requested by the General Assembly in para. 15 of its resolution 49/109.

ANNEX

Summary status report on activities of the Secretariat related to the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)

I. FOLLOW-UP TO THE SECOND SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

1. Immediately after the second substantive session of the Preparatory Committee, activities were undertaken with regard to three major aspects of the preparatory process: (a) the organization and convening of inter-sessional meetings of the informal drafting group to produce as complete a document as possible on the statement of principles and commitments and the related global plan of action; (b) the mobilization of financial resources to support the core activities of the Secretariat and to provide technical and financial support for in-country preparations; and (c) the organization and mobilization of funding for convening an independent jury for the best practices initiative and for disseminating the best practices world wide. The interim results of these activities are summarized below.

A. Core activities (directly undertaken by the Secretariat)

1. Statement of principles and commitments and global plan of action

2. Two inter-sessional meetings of the informal drafting group were convened to continue work on the draft statement of principles and commitments and the global plan of action. The informal drafting group met in Nairobi from 17 to 21 July 1995. In addition to the core group of countries representing their respective regions and the chair, an additional 33 countries, five United Nations system entities and intergovernmental organizations, two associations of local authorities and five non-governmental organizations participated in the first meeting of the informal drafting group. The second session of the informal drafting group has been convened to take place in Paris, from 9 to 13 October 1995, upon the invitation of the Government of France.

2. Direct support to in-country preparations

3. In conformity with the decisions adopted by the Preparatory Committee at its first substantive session and the further guidance provided at its second session, the Secretariat has, to date, provided technical and financial support to national committees for Habitat II in the following areas:

(a) Application of shelter and urban indicators;

(b) Learning from best practices in improving the living environment;

(c) Formulation of a first-stage five-year plan of action.

To date, financial and technical assistance has been provided to 62 countries (35 in Africa, 11 in Asia and the Pacific, 6 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 4 belonging to the Arab States and 6 countries with economies in transition).

B. Partnership activities

4. These include activities undertaken, in cooperation with the Secretariat, by other United Nations system entities, intergovernmental organizations and other international associations on issues and themes related to the Conference. Their purpose is to enrich the preparatory process and to create awareness of the themes and issues of the Conference and on best practice initiatives so as to inform national plans of action and the Global Plan of Action of the Conference. These activities form the calendar of events entitled "The Learning Year". This calendar includes 90 independently funded events taking place between June 1995 and April 1996, organized by, inter alia, 16 entities of the United Nations system, 17 cities and their associations of local authorities, 9 intergovernmental organizations, 13 non-governmental organizations, 15 universities and similar institutions, 11 professional associations, 12 national committees for Habitat II, associations of parliamentarians and the private sector. Some examples of such partnership events, held to date, and forthcoming shortly, are:

(a) Habitat II Urban Finance Conference, Washington, D.C., 10-13 September 1995, co-sponsored by the World Bank and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. Participants included senior policy makers, city officials and professionals from 30 countries;

(b) Global Workshop on Transport and Communication, Singapore, 3-5 July 1995, sponsored by the University of Singapore. Participants included senior policy makers and professionals from 23 countries and 10 United Nations agencies;

(c) Interregional Consultation on Access to Land and Security of Tenure for Africa and Arab States, Abidjan, 24-25 March 1995. Participants included senior policy makers and experts from 14 African and 6 Arab States;

(d) United Nations University/World Institute for Development Economics Research Conference on Human Settlements in Changing Political and Economic Processes, Helsinki, 25-27 August 1995;

(e) Global Workshop on Urban Governance, organized jointly by the Government of Germany and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Berlin, 24-27 October 1995;

(f) The Dubai International Conference on Best Practices in Improving the Living Environment, Dubai, 19-22 November 1995. More than 50 countries are expected to attend this meeting;

(g) The Beijing Conference on Managing Water Resources in Rapidly Growing Cities, Beijing, 10-16 January 1996.

5. An important feature of the preparatory process is the involvement of a large number of partners, which include local authorities, associations of parliamentarians, professionals, academicians, non-governmental and community-based organizations and youth groups. This is reflected not only in the variety of activities being undertaken by these different actors, but also in the inclusion of representatives of these partners in the national delegations to the second substantive session of the Preparatory Committee. Eight international and regional associations of local authorities have formed themselves into one group, the Group of 4+, under the "Protocol of Lisbon", which sets out the framework for cooperation among cities and local authorities in the preparatory process. Local authorities also plan to hold a World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities at Istanbul prior to the Conference.

C. Regional meetings and consultations a/

6. During the course of 1995, a number of regional and subregional preparatory meetings have been or will be held at the ministerial level to formulate regional or subregional positions on the Conference's statement of principles and commitments and the global plan of action. These include:

(a) Habitat II preparatory meeting for Eastern, Central and Southern Africa, Kampala, 26-28 February 1995;

(b) Subregional ministerial meeting for francophone Central Africa on Habitat II, Brazzaville, 10-12 April 1995;

(c) Meeting of ministers responsible for human settlements in European transition countries on Habitat II preparatory activities, Budapest, 13-14 June 1995; organized in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Europe;

(d) Caribbean Regional Preparatory Workshop for Habitat II, Bridgetown, 25-27 September 1995;

(e) Third Arab Preparatory Conference for Habitat II, Rabat, 25-30 September 1995;

(f) Regional Ministerial Meeting for Africa on Preparations for Habitat II, Johannesburg, 16-19 November 1995; organized jointly by the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization of African Unity;

(g) Regional Preparatory Meeting on Habitat II for Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago, 15-17 November 1995; organized by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

7. In addition, the thirteenth session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Housing and Reconstruction, to take place at Cairo from 12 to 15 November 1995, will have a special session devoted to Habitat II.

8. Apart from the above meetings, a number of regional consultations are ongoing on issues critical to the Conference, such as land management and

financing of shelter and urban development. These are expected to provide important technical inputs to the plan of action to be adopted at Istanbul as well as develop innovative implementation tools for human settlements management and development in the post-Conference period.

D. Special programmes, projects and awareness-building

9. These activities are sponsored or co-sponsored by public and private sector foundations and professional associations. They are intended to mobilize specific audiences and the public at large through the following types of activities:

(a) Establishment of three World Wide Web sites on the Internet containing documentation and information of relevance to the Conference;

(b) An "award of excellence in improving the living environment" is being organized to take place at Istanbul at a special ceremony to give special recognition to the most deserving practices for improving people's quality of life;

(c) Two books are being published in time for the Conference, one entitled Cities for People and the other entitled Local Authorities: Custodians of the Environment;

(d) Television specials, including case-studies on "best practices", are being aired on global and international television networks, including CNN;

(e) An electronic catalogue and database on best practices for improving the living environment is currently in preparation for the Conference;

(f) A global trade fair on "good ideas for better cities" is being organized to coincide with the Conference at Istanbul.

10. The following partners' forums are being organized by relevant associations to take place just prior to the official opening of the Conference:

(a) A World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities is being organized by the Group of 4+ of international associations of local authorities. The Assembly will take place from 31 May to 1 June 1996 at Istanbul, with an anticipated participation of more than 350 mayors of large cities. The Assembly is expected to ratify the Local Authority Platform of Action and Commitments to the Global Plan of Action;

(b) A Forum of National Academies of Sciences from all over the world will take place at Istanbul on 31 May and 1 June 1996, and is expected to adopt a statement on the role of cities in the development and transfer of technology;

(c) A Private Sector Forum will take place at Istanbul, also on 31 May and 1 June 1996. This Forum will gather representatives from the private sector from all regions, including representatives from industry, commerce, service and

banking sectors. The Forum will conclude with an award ceremony for corporate best practices for improving the living environment;

(d) A Forum of Parliamentarians will take place at Istanbul, on 31 May and 1 June 1996, to be convened by, inter alia, the Inter-Parliamentarian Union and the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat;

(e) The NGO Global Forum for Habitat II will commence on 1 June and end on 13 June 1996. It is being convened by the ad hoc Habitat II NGO/CBO International Facilitating Group.

Other forums that are in the process of being organized include a labour unions' forum, an international forum for youth, a foundations' forum, a forum of urban professionals and a forum on human solidarity.

11. Round tables on the following themes are being organized by eminent persons, media networks and private sector corporations and foundations to create global awareness of the issues before the Conference:

(a) Economy and employment in the cities of tomorrow;

(b) Transport in the cities of tomorrow;

(c) Are mega-cities inevitable?

(d) Urban-rural linkages of the future;

(e) Urban physiology of the twenty-first century;

(f) Democracy and citizenship in the city of the twenty-first century;

(g) Cities and the information society.

II. IN-COUNTRY ACTIVITIES FOR HABITAT II

A. Activities at the country level

12. As of September 1995, 133 countries had indicated to the Secretariat the establishment of broad-based national committees, which are in the process of preparing their respective national plans, of action involving, on an unprecedented magnitude and scope, the public, private, NGO, community, professional and academic sectors. The best practices initiative, designed to focus world attention on practical solutions to some of the most pressing issues facing an urbanizing world, has generated great interest and enthusiasm. More than 270 best practice case-studies have been submitted by 77 countries; 42 countries are in the process of organizing national competitions/exhibitions on best practices, with a regional competition currently under way in Latin America. It is expected that more than 100 countries will submit, in total, over 500 best practice case-studies. Similarly, as of September 1995, 59 countries are involved in the indicators programme, as part of the national preparatory process and for inclusion in national reports for Habitat II. Of

these, 12 countries have submitted their indicators, 47 countries are in the process of collecting data and another 22 countries are expected to start collecting indicators soon. It is expected that more than 100 countries will be involved in the collection of key indicators.

B. Briefing missions

13. Briefing missions on Habitat II were undertaken in all regions of the world and in more than 80 countries. These missions included ad hoc technical advisory missions in response to specific requests for assistance.

C. Preparations under way in the host country of the Conference

14. In April 1994, the Housing Development Administration of Turkey was designated as the organization responsible for the coordination and implementation of preparations for the Conference. The administration carries out this task under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Turkey. In October 1994, the Habitat II Project Coordination Unit was established. Initially, US$ 10 million was allocated by the host country for host country preparations, exclusive of approximately US$ 25 million for preparing the physical facilities for the Conference. In June 1995, the Istanbul Organizing Committee, comprising the heads of all relevant central and local government branches, was established.

15. The Conference, the associated forums and most of the parallel activities will be held in the so-called "Conference Valley", containing such facilities as a congress centre, a concert hall, a cultural centre, an open-air amphitheatre, a convention hall and the meeting hall and classrooms of the Taskisla Building of the Istanbul Technical University. This site has been chosen because of its central location and proximity to most of the major hotels. The premises were inspected during the United Nations planning mission to Istanbul in April 1995 and found to be more than suitable. Closed-circuit television coverage of the events is scheduled to take place to allow participants to remain informed of activities elsewhere in the Valley. A channel of the Turkish Radio and Television Authority will be allocated to UNTV, whose broadcasts will be piped into all major hotels.

16. A self-financing international trade fair is being organized by the host country in conjunction with Habitat II on the theme of innovative, low-cost, appropriate and environmentally sound products, services and technologies in the field of human settlements. As the result of an international bidding process, CNR International Fair Organizations, Inc. was awarded the contract for organizing, marketing and managing the fair. The fair will be held at the World Trade Centre, Istanbul, where an exhibition area of approximately 30,000 m^2 indoors and 50,000 m^2 outdoors is available, 15 per cent of which will be allocated free of charge to the Habitat secretariat for the use of firms from the developing countries.

17. In addition to the exhibition on best practices, to be organized by the Habitat II secretariat, the Economic and Social History Foundation of Turkey was

commissioned to organize two exhibitions: "The World City of Istanbul" and "Housing and Settlements in Anatolia", both to be held at the Ottoman Mint. Other cultural events are also being planned. A consortium was designated as the advertising agency for the Conference and various promotional materials have already been produced.

18. Following consultations with the non-governmental organizations present at the second substantive session of the Preparatory Committee, a professional secretariat was established and a host committee, comprising about 20 Turkish non-governmental organizations, was set up. At the end of September 1995, a joint workshop of the host committee and the Habitat II International Facilitating Group was held at Istanbul to discuss various issues related to Habitat II, as well as the details of the NGO Forum to be organized during the Conference.

III. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

19. Since the beginning of 1995, the Secretariat has embarked on a new series of regular publications that focus on the issues confronting human settlements, which will be addressed at the Habitat II Conference, and that report key activities in the preparatory process. The publications are as follows:

(a) Six issues of the journal/newsletter Countdown to Istanbul are being issued in 1995, with an additional three or four issues planned for 1996. This regular publication focuses on key issues, as well as national and regional preparatory activities for the Conference. It provides a source of feedback from the various actors in the national context on their policies. In addition, it gives voice to a wide range of actors in the human settlements sector, including youth, women and shelter groups, and associations of community-based organizations, as well as to academic research and host country preparations;

(b) Habitat Debate, the new journal of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) on the substantive programmes of the Centre, is of direct relevance to raising awareness and for debate on new directions in human settlements action. Its contributors are primarily academics and practitioners in the field. Habitat Debate also provides another channel for reporting directly on meetings organized specifically to address the thematic issues of Habitat II.

Both of the above publications are issued in English, French and Spanish and are being distributed to a growing mailing list, which, in October 1995, counted 15,000. Like other information materials and all official documents, they are also available on three web sites on the Internet. They are further being distributed at all major meetings and global conferences.

20. Since the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee, the Secretariat has formalized its joint information activities with the Department of Public Information. A new brochure has been prepared in all official languages of the United Nations and is being issued to national committees and other partners of the Habitat process, together with a poster and an information kit of "backgrounders".

21. A second promotional video on the goals of the Conference has been prepared, and is being disseminated in English and French, with Arabic and Spanish versions to follow shortly. The promotional video is targeted at national and international broadcast networks as well as national committees and all other partners in the preparatory process. A 60-second public service announcement in English, French and Spanish is being prepared for distribution to broadcast outlets world wide by the end of 1995. Further documentaries are being produced by an international network for release in the last quarter of 1995 and in 1996. In addition, a number of regional and national networks are producing and broadcasting programmes conveying the messages of Habitat II. In collaboration with the Department of Public Information, a range of television and radio programmes have been produced in 1995 and more are planned for 1996.

22. The Secretariat was successful in projecting a high profile for the Conference at the two United Nations conferences held in 1995 - the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women - by reaching out to all actors, through press briefings and workshops, and through distributing information materials. Similarly, at the second session of the Preparatory Committee, some 30 press conferences were held to give voice to the many partners involved in the Conference's preparatory process. They were followed by more than 30 press releases in English and French. A number of press and public relations agencies have been engaged to support public awareness activities at the global level, during the two United Nations conferences mentioned above and at the second session of the Preparatory Committee, as well as during the interim periods.

23. As part of the mobilization strategy for Habitat II, a series of some 70 international and regional conferences, workshops and seminars have been organized. Each of these meetings helped to further awareness of the Conference and served as a vehicle for the diffusion of information and awareness-building materials.

Notes

a/ Attention is also drawn, in this connection, to the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the regional commissions on the preparations for the Conference at the regional level (A/50/411), requested by the General Assembly in para. 15 of its resolution 49/109.